

Module 12: The Changing Times – The 2000s to the Present
Topic 2 Content: Rule of Law

Introduction



The Rule of Law.

Click the NEXT button to examine the cases of Gideon versus Wainwright and Snyder versus Phelps.

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Gideon v. Wainwright



Gideon v. Wainwright

Some states claimed people were not entitled to a lawyer if charged with offenses other than capital crimes.

Gideon was not given a lawyer and found guilty.


The Supreme Court allowed for a retrial and found Gideon not guilty.

Based on the Sixth Amendment, states must now provide a lawyer.

Prior to the Gideon versus Wainwright case in 1963, some states claimed people were not entitled to a lawyer if charged with offenses other than capital crimes. Due to this law, when Mr. Gideon went to trial after being charged with stealing, he was denied a lawyer, and found guilty. Gideon then used prison stationery to appeal to the Supreme Court, who agreed with him, and allowed for a retrial with lawyer representation. Ultimately Gideon was found not guilty. This landmark case resulted in the Supreme Court unanimously declaring that, based on the Sixth Amendment, states must provide a lawyer to individuals who cannot afford one in criminal cases.

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Snyder v. Phelps



Snyder v. Phelps

Extremists protested against homosexuality during soldiers' funerals.

Mr. Snyder sued the for emotional distress.

The jury sided with Snyder.

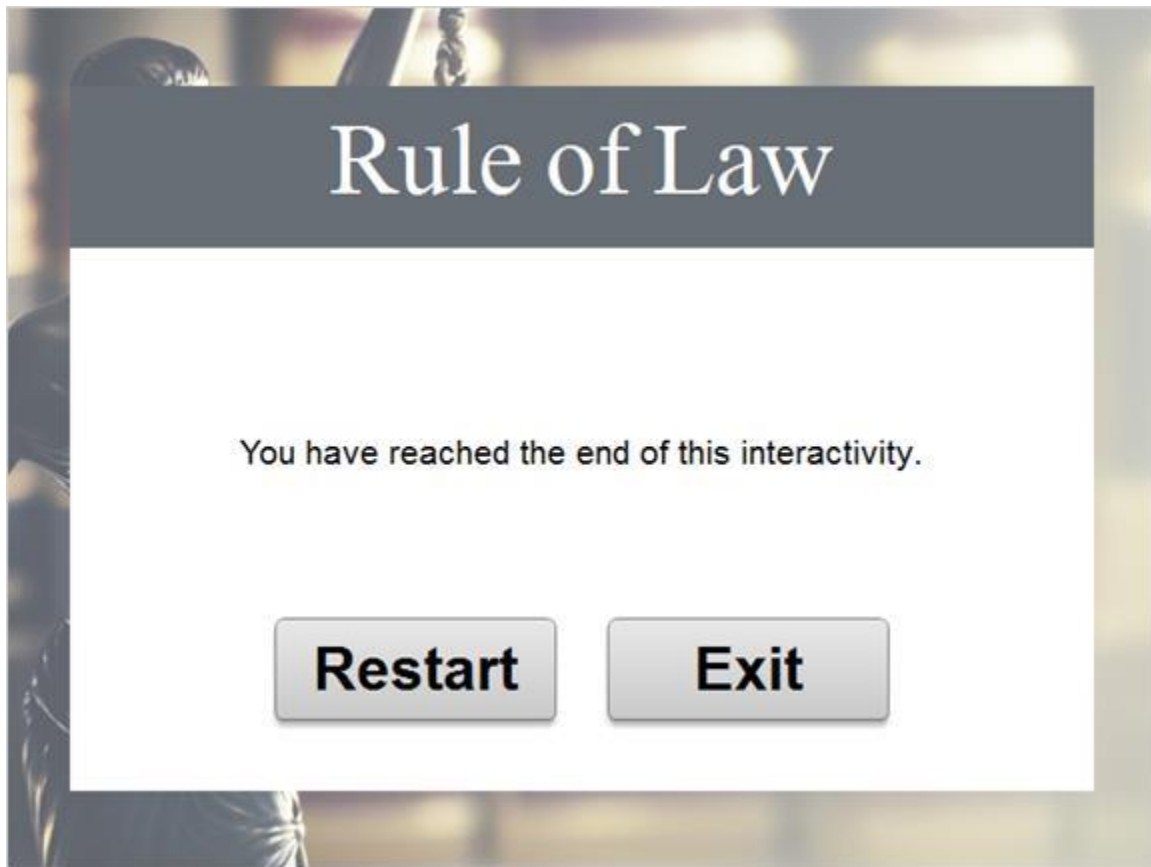
The Supreme Court sided with the protesters.

The First Amendment gives Americans free speech without restriction.

In 2011, a group of religious extremists protested against homosexuality during the funerals of soldiers, including one who died in the Iraq War. The father of that soldier, Mr. Snyder, sued the protesters, claiming emotional distress. The jury sided with Mr. Snyder, but the protesters appealed the ruling all the way to Supreme Court. In an eight to one decision, the Supreme Court ruled that the protesters' actions were protected under the First Amendment that gives Americans the right to free speech conducted on public property without restriction, even if that speech is offensive.

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Conclusion



You have reached the end of this interactivity.